

## **USDA SELECTS WATERSHEDS FOR 2006 CONSERVATION SECURITY (CSP) PROGRAM**

**Two Northwestern Minnesota Watersheds are selected for the 2006 CSP program**

ST PAUL, Minnesota, August 26, 2005--Agriculture Deputy Secretary Chuck Conner announced on August 25, 2005 in Palmar, Alaska that 110 watersheds, with at least one in all 50 states, Guam and Puerto Rico, are eligible for the 2006 Conservation Security Program (CSP).

In Minnesota, two CSP watersheds have been selected, the Red Lakes Watershed and the Thief Watershed. Both of these watersheds are located in northwest Minnesota and represent 463,073 acres of cropland and pasture land. There are 1,013 producers who are potentially eligible for the 2006 CSP program in the Red Lakes and Thief Watersheds.

"This voluntary program recognizes farmers and ranchers for their ongoing stewardship activities on working agricultural lands," said William Hunt, State Conservationist, Minnesota NRCS. "Natural resource conservation efforts by America's producers benefit everyone through healthier soil, cleaner air and water and improved fish and wildlife habitat. CSP successfully demonstrates a cooperative public-private conservation partnership," said Hunt.

The sign-up period will take place early in fiscal year 2006. These watersheds represent more than 120,000 of the nation's potentially eligible farms and ranches, covering more than 46 million acres that are evenly split between cropland and grazing land.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service held the first CSP sign-up in 2004. This CSP announcement brings the number of watersheds enrolled to 330 across the nation, covering 250 million acres that have been eligible for the program.

The 2006 CSP will include a renewable energy component. Eligible producers will receive compensation for converting to renewable energy fuels such as bio-diesel and ethanol, for recycling 100 percent of on-farm lubricants, and for implementing energy production, including wind, solar, geothermal and methane production.

CSP will be offered each year on a rotational basis in as many watersheds as funding allows.

Additional information on the CSP, including a national map of the fiscal year 2006 watersheds and eligibility requirements, is on the Web at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp>.